

Change in Kansas Law Affects Cancer Reporting

A recent change in Kansas law that strengthens the reporting of cancer cases in the state is designed to improve reporting and the ability to analyze data. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) announced the recent change, which will require physicians, doctors of Osteopathy, dentists and others, to report cancer diagnoses to the Kansas Cancer Registry (KCR) located at the University of Kansas Medical Center.

The change in the law removes the exemption of proactive cancer reporting from those health practitioners who practice medicine and surgery. Those individuals will now be required to report cases of cancer. More than 500 doctors and health practitioners in Kansas received notification by letter during October.

“This measure is expected to significantly improve cancer reporting in Kansas,” said Roderick Bremby, KDHE Secretary. “It is estimated that currently 600-700 cancer deaths occur each year in which the cancer diagnosis has not been reported to the registry.”

This estimate was calculated by comparing mortality data with cancer cases reported in the registry and to the Surveillance Epidemiology End Results (SEER) standard. This standard estimates that in a state with Kansas’ demographics about 13,450 cases of cancer would be reported each year. Kansas currently registers about 12,400 each year and that number has dropped in recent years due to a shift in the health care system to outpatient settings. As the number of unreported cancer cases increases, the ability of the state to analyze cancer data with a high degree of reliability diminishes.

Prior to this change, persons licensed to practice medicine and surgery were specifically exempted from active reporting but submitted case information upon request of the Kansas Cancer Registry. These health professionals will now be able to comply with the changes in the law by reporting to KDHE the pathologists and pathology laboratories they use to complete tests and by keeping an electronic log of patient information for those diagnosed with cancer that will be submitted to the registry.

The Kansas Cancer Registry, required by law since 1997, authorized KDHE to collect data pertaining to all cancers occurring in the state from hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers, radiology oncology centers and pathology laboratories. KDHE contracts with the University of Kansas Medical Center to operate the KCR, which collects cancer statistics in a confidential database that provides information regarding incidence and mortality due to cancer.

For more information about the recent changes to the Kansas law contact Dr. Sue-Min Lai, Director of the Kansas Cancer Registry at the University of Kansas Medical School at 913-588-2744.